June 2018

Kalyāṇamittā

Buddhist and Pāli College of Singapore

Message from the Chairman of BPCA….

Dear Bhantes, members of BPCA and students of BPC, we have peacefully and happily passed through the first half of 2018 with no major turbulence or conflict here and around the world. BPCA would like to thank sister Elizabeth Kheh for organizing a very happy and enjoyable Chinese New Year celebration in February 2018 for the students of BPC. BPCA also would like to thank Brother Eric Wong and Brother Jeffrey Chieng for organizing a very good Chinese New Year dana for the Bhantes.

In March 2018, Brother James Phoon and Brother Eric Wong had successfully organized a holy tour of the Ellora and Ajanta caves in India. All the devotees who had travelled with the group were very satisfied and had requested for more overseas holy tours.

BPCA would like to thank sister Jasmine Tan and her team for organizing the 16th "Introduction to Buddhism" course in March / April / May 2018 and for collecting the dana from the students for BPCA and Mangala Vihara.

At the Vesak day celebration in May 2018, Brother Eric Wong and the volunteers did a good job at Mangala Vihara. In addition to selling books and promoting the BPC courses, they had also used the latest video technology to attract the devotees to sign up for the BPC diploma course. In addition, the team had also promoted the 2018 BPC Silver Jubilee Symposium at the Vesak day celebration.

Moving into the second half of 2018, we would like to encourage all to come and participate in the BPC Silver Jubilee Symposium in September 2018. Many prominent speakers would be invited to speak at the symposium and make sure that you collect your T-shirt and the book designed for the symposium. Please do come forward to volunteer and support at the BPC symposium if you are available on that day.

Sabbe Satta Bhavantu Sukhi Tatta (May all beings be well and happy)

Alex Goh (BSc (Hons) BA MA)
Honorary Chairman
Buddhist and Pali College Alumni (BPCA)

MEMBERS OF THE BPC ALUMINI COMMITTEE 2017-18

Honorary Advisor – Bhante Gnanarama & Bhante Seelananda

Honorary Chairman - Alex Goh @ Nimala

Honorary Secretary – Tham Saik Hoong

Honorary Treasurer - Elizabeth Kheh

Head of Volunteer & Student Services – James Phoon

Head of Continuing Education Services – Jeffrey Chieng

Head of Events and Bonding – James Phoon / Eric Wong

Head of Editorial – Eric Wong

Head of IT and Computer Resources – Patrick Lim

BPCA CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR 2018

Past Events

CNY for Bhantes at Restaurant	24 Feb 2018
Lo Hei at Mangala Vihara	25 Feb 2018
1st Intro to Buddhism Course (16th Intake)	7 Mar 2018
Holy Tour of India Ellora Caves (8 Days)	9 March 2018
Vesak Day (2018)	29 May 2018

Upcoming Events

Tai Chi Class – Every Monday 7.30 to 9.00 pm	Every Monday
Diploma Preview	21 July (MV) 5 August (PMT)
2nd Intro to Buddhism Course (17th Intake)	25 July 2018
Diploma Orientation Day	7 October 2018

For details, please contact BPCA Honorary Secretary at

bpca2017sg@gmail.com

MISSION
BUDDHIST AND PALI COLLEGE of SINGAPORE

To provide tertiary education in Buddhist Studies leading to award of Diploma, Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts and PhD of the Buddhist & Pali University of Sri Lanka.

The Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore was set up in 1993 as an educational project to complement the Dhamma Classes.

Our email contact :
bpca2017sg@gmail.com

for editorials, general enquiries and any matters relating to our Alumni

FROM THE EDITOR

We celebrated Vesak, had a great day on the grounds of Mangala Vihara. All too soon, it came and go. We are now less than 6 months from exams, students should have a firm grasp of what to expect, and start to switch mode to preparations for exams. In this issue, Bhante Gnanarama shared his thoughts about the Vassa, and we have a contribution from Brother Tham (our Hon Sec) on Psychology (on Mindfulness Meditation). Good read for those who are striving in meditation.

I leave you now to read the articles in tis newsletter, and don't forget to participate in the Vassa and Kathina events.

We welcome any contribution of articles that relates to Buddhism or Buddhist way of life. In fact we encourage you to contribute since this Newsletter is for YOU. And if you feel an urge to serve our community, we have vacancies in our Alumni team. Contact us and we can work something out.

Write to us at our official eMail address : bpca2017sg@gmail.com

w/Metta

The Editorial Team

The following is a message from Bhante Gnanarama, BPC Principal to his devotees at Tisarana, which we are reproducing here. We encourage our students to join our Principal at Tisarana for the Vassa events.

Rainy Retreat

The three month's period of Rainy Retreat for the year 2018 begins from 27th of July. Ti-Sarana Buddhist Association has made arrangements to invite the monks to observe the retreat on the premises of Ti-Sarana during the retreat period.

Whether the monks are invited or not, in accordance with the Buddha's injunction, the higher ordained monks are obliged to observe the retreat during the rainy season. This is an age-old Buddhist tradition practiced throughout all the Theravada Buddhist countries. The laity by inviting them to observe the retreat in a particular place paves the path for their own spiritual cultivation as well as the monks well being.. As Ti-Sarana members and devotees have been doing for the past four decades, this year too they will invite the monks for the retreat.

Participation of the Devotees

As recorded in the Buddhist history, from the time of the Buddha, it was a tradition among the Buddhist followers to frequent the monasteries during the retreat period. They gathered together at the monasteries not for idle talk but for Dhamma activities leading to their spiritual progress. They listen to Dhamma talks, engage in Dhamma discussions and chanting, practice meditation and attend to welfare works together for the well being of themselves and others. While monks observe the retreat, the laity attends to them with four requisites of alms, robes, lodging and medicament and the monks in turn help the laity by way of instructing them for their spiritual cultivation.

Additional Dhamma Activities in the Period

In addition to usual Daily Puja, Pagoda Lamps of Blessing and Poya Puja, the Management Committee has devised several religious programmes to be performed during the three months retreat period. Dhamma Talks, Weekly Meditation Sessions of one hour duration and Daily Chanting Sessions after the evening Puja have been arranged particularly for the sake of Ti-Sarana community. Dhamma talks will cover the different aspects of Buddhist doctrine, ethics, culture and the application of Buddhism for the daily life. At the initial meditation sessions instructions will be given for Vipassanâ meditation to orientate the participants in the technique of the insight meditation. The Chanting of Parittas and Suttas up to the end of the 2nd Chapter of the Great book of Protections, which includes 15 Suttas and Parittas altogether, will be conducted daily after the Puja according to the sequence they are documented in the book.

The chanting is arranged in order to guide the devotees to pronounce Pali words correctly and efficiently with confidence and to derive the desired effect of the chanting fully. Since the word of the Buddha is Truth, nothing but Truth, these chants are basically meant to invoke the power of Truth for blessings to those who chant and listen. On the initiative of the Buddha, they were chanted to ward off evil influences and usher peace, Health, prosperity and success in one's undertaking.

Don't miss this opportunity! Come to the temple and participate in these religious programmes for your own benefit in this life and in the next.

Ven. Dr. P. Gnanarama

Vesak at Mangala Vihara

As usual, during this year Vesak, BPCA had a stall at Mangala Vihara. Brother James helped with the preparations for BPC Silver Jubilee Symposium to get more exposure. The crowd was getting huge round about lunch time, but thin out soon after. At around 3pm plus, the organizer told us we can pack up. It was kind of sad that it was ending….

Vassa

Most of us are aware of the story about why there was a Vassa, the Rainy Retreats. Well, because the pheasants were complaining that the Sramanas (recluses and Monks) were treading on their crops. And also because of the flood, being unable to see where their foot is being placed while walking, the Monks walking bare-footed may exposed themselves to more danger than others.

But there is another interesting story that gave rise to the offering of robes, Kathina.

According to the story, 30 forest dwelling monks had the intention of spending the Vassa with the Budhha at Savatthi and was hurriedly travelling towards the Buddha. Unfortunately, due to delay, with the onslaught of the rains, they had to stop at Saketa and enter into Vassa which is only about 60 km from Buddha. [the distance is equivalent to Tanah Merah to Tuas. During those times, this is considered a short distance for travelling]

The 30 Monks passed their time there without conflict, sharing and practicing the Dhamma as per tradition, but in their hearts, they missed their Teacher, the Buddha very much. When the Vassa ended, the Monks continued their journey even though it was still drizzling. When they reached the Buddha, they were all muddied and dripping wet, and was embarrassed to see their revered teacher in such an untidy state. It should be noted that Monks cannot ask for robes, they can only accept it when someone else offered them. The Buddha was much pleased with them that despite the fact that they were so close by, they stopped and entered into Vassa as per the instructions that was laid down by him. The Buddha read their minds and offered them cloth for making into robes that they can change into.

That is why, to this day, we practice the tradition of Robes Offering during Kathina. It has been modified slightly with the offering of other requisites too, all for the well-being of the Monks.

Today, all of us join in the tradition of Robes (and requisites) Offering, on this joyous occasion, in this meritorious deed of providing for the well being of the monastics.

EOW

Psychology

Mindfulness Meditation May Have Been Overhyped

From the Scientist/ Psychologist perspective, people have been wondered aloud whether mindfulness meditation have been overhyped. Mindfulness meditation has been practiced for millennia – and today is a billion-dollar business. But how much does the practice really change our health?

According to scientists/psychologist various forms of meditation are now routinely offered to people with mental condition who suffer from stress, anxiety, depression after a very frightening or shocking experience. Today, it has touted as a therapeutic tool to help patient suffering from conditions and the said disorders. According to them it has come into vogue as a way to enhance human performance, finding its way into classrooms, businesses, websites through Internet.

Mindfulness meditation, a type of meditation that focuses the mind on the present moment, is very popular which has even become a billion-dollar business. For all its popularity, however, it's still unclear exactly what mindfulness meditation does to the human brain, how it influences health and to what extent it helps people suffering from physical and mental challenges. Meditation has been practiced for thousands of years, but psychologists and neuroscientists have studied it for only a few decades. Some scientists discover that meditation can help people relax, manage chronic stress and pains and even reduce reliance on pain medication. Some of the most impressive studies to date involve a treatment called mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, which combines meditation with psychotherapy to help patients deal with thoughts that lead to anxiety, stress, depression and others chronic pains.

According to the David Creswell a psychologist cum scientist, meditation requires one to sit still and focus on the mere act of breathing which can encourage mindfulness. But he found that most people spend most or all of their day being anything but mindful. They skip from one thought to another. They daydream. They ruminate about the past, and they worry about the future. They self-analyse and self-criticise. When people who meditate say they are paying attention to the present moment, they may be focused on their breathing, but maybe also on an emotion that surfaces and then passes, a mental image, inner chatter or a sensation in the body. According to him one must adopting an attitude of openness and acceptance toward one's experience is critical to becoming more mindful. He added that the idea is to view these moments with a detached and non-judgmental curiosity. Even the simple but challenging act of sitting still for an hour while meditating made a great impact on him. He illustrated that having this disconnect between my body feeling in pain but my mind being completely silent and open… these were very powerful insights for him about how a [meditation] practice could really change people's lives, or fundamentally change how they relate to suffering in their lives. There wasn't a bolt-of-lightning moment for him but a lot of these moments of insight in his own retreat experiences that suggested to him that it was worth spending time and effort to do the science. People from different religious, cultural and philosophical backgrounds have expounded the benefits of meditation for millennia.

Meditation is indeed most commonly associated with Buddhism, which views it as an instrument for achieving spiritual fulfilment and peace and happiness. Scientist calls the act of meditation - a basic feature of being human. However they noted that the scientific evidence for its benefits such as relaxing, peaceful and calm mind is still lacking.
Alongside clinical work, neuroscientists have wanted to know how, if at all, meditation might change what actually is happening inside the brain. Does meditation make certain regions more active than others, or more robustly connect one region to another? Does meditation result in new neurons, which is really changing the brain structure? Some studies along the way indicated affirmative.

Neuroscientists have found that the physical effects of mindfulness meditation using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and other techniques for the last two decades. Progress has followed on the growing recognition that the human brain is capable of physical changes throughout adulthood, even into old age – forming new connections and growing new neurons when someone learns a new skill, challenges themselves mentally or even just exercises. The emerging view of a brain that can be continually shaped through experience, dubbed neuroplasticity, replaced the long-held idea that after the first few decades of life, the brain's physiological trajectory was basically one of decline. Several brain studies suggest that mindfulness meditation may spark neuroplastic renovations in the brain's function and structure.

Looking under the hood with fMRI, scientists have discovered mindfulness meditation activates a network of brain regions that includes the insula (associated with compassion, empathy and self-awareness), the putamen (learning) and portions of the anterior cingulate cortex (regulating blood pressure, heart rate and other autonomic functions) and the prefrontal cortex (the hub of higher-order thinking skills such as planning, decision-making and moderating social behaviour).

When it comes to actual structural changes in the brain, some studies suggest that mindfulness meditation may increase grey matter density in the hippocampus, a brain region essential to memory. Researchers ding Britta Hölzel, a researcher of the Massachusetts General Hospital, found evidence for this in a 2011 study.

Though intriguing, these studies are nowhere near the end goal. He added that further studies are required to understand the benefits that the changes in the brain have on behaviour and well-being. He said that changing the brain' sounds very impressive, but we don't understand what it actually means.

Another scientist, Lazar consented and added that most of the data has only looked at changes over the course of two months of [meditation] practice… Most people feel that [meditation] continues to change and get deeper with extended practice. Therefore, we need to conduct studies that follow people for much longer time points.

Based on their studies of people engaged in meditation, scientists have proposed that mindfulness acts as a buffer specifically against stress. It does this by increasing activity in regions of the prefrontal cortex that are important for "top-down stress regulation", while reducing activity and functional connectivity in regions associated with the brain's fight-or-flight stress response – in particular, the amygdala which is one or two parts of the brain that affect how people feel emotions or fears, or threats. It is not a simple alarm centre associated with responding to threats or emotions. It is central to what is called the salience network which vital for noticing all kinds of important things in one's environment.

Nevertheless, scientist studies found mindfulness meditation may alleviate symptoms of general anxiety disorder by increasing connectivity between the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex, thereby increasing a patient's ability to regulate emotions. Meditation may also lessen the perception of pain by reducing pain-related activation of the somatosensory cortex and increasing activation of areas involved in the cognitive regulation of pain.

Fundamentally, mindfulness is an elusive quality to study. It's an internally generated experience, not a drug that scientists can give to a patient. That creates a question when comparing mindfulness between individuals and especially between distinct studies.

But psychologist found that people who have faced serious mental illness, and others and who use mindfulness meditation to ease daily stress, say they are convinced the practice improves their lives. One day, scientists hope to be able to link that experience to what's physically happening in the meditating mind.

What's more, there is no universally accepted definition of mindfulness or agreement among researchers on the details of what it entails yet, according to the scientists in their Perspectives on Psychological Science article.

Tham Saik Hoong

VIRATI

In our pursuit of proper cultivation in Buddhist Practices, there are many Mental Factors that we need to understand and master. In this article, we shall look at Virati. ***Virati means to refrain from delighting in***. The volition (cetana) to refrain from such misconduct itself becomes the beautiful mental factor.

The commentary explains these abstinences under three categories:

i. Natural Abstinence (Sampatta Virati)
- Abstinence from wrongful acts or speech when such occasions arise
- Person may do so in consideration of his social position, age or the relationship etc.

ii. Abstinence through observance of precepts (Samadana Virati)
- When any intention to perform wrongdoing arises, person may reflect upon precepts he has observed and hence refrain from such misconduct

iii.Abstinence by eradication (Sammuccheda Virati)
- Occurs when one enters Aryayan stages of Sotapatthi, Sakadagami, Anagami and Arhat magga cittas
- At these moments, defilements (kilesas) are not only suppressed, but completely eradicated, never to rise again

The three abstinences form the basic foundation of Sila in the Noble Eightfold Path declared by the Buddha. They are:

i. Right Speech (Samma Vaca)
- To abstain from false speech (musavada), slandering (pisunavaca), harsh speech (pharusavaca) and frivolous talk (sampapphalapa)

ii. Right Action (Samma Kammanta)
- To abstain from killing (panatipata), stealing (adinnadana) and sexual misconduct (kamesu micchacara)

iv. Right Livelihood (Samma Ajiva)
- To abstain from wrong livelihood
- Earnings should be derived from righteous means disassociated with samma vaca and samma kammanta
- Fair trade is ok, but not selling slaves, animals for slaughter, weapons, intoxicants or poison

The Thirty-Eight Blessings (mangalas)

1. Not associating with fools.
2. Associating with the wise.
3. Reverencing those worthy of respect.
4. Residence in a suitable locality.
5. Having made merit in the past.
6. One's mind properly directed.
7. Profound learning.
8. Proficiency in one's work.
9. Well-learned moral discipline
10. Gracious kindly speech.
11. Giving support to parents.
12. Cherishing spouse and children.
13. Business pursuits, peaceful and free from conflicts.
14. Acts of giving.
15. Conduct according to the Dhamma.
16. Helping one's relatives.
17. Blameless actions.
18. Shunning evil.
19. Abstaining from evil.
20. Refraining from intoxicants.
21. Diligence in practice of what is the Dhamma.
22. Reverence.
23. Humility.
24. Contentment.
25. Gratefulness.
26. Timely hearing of the Dhamma
27. Patience
28. Meekness when corrected.
29. Meeting (seeing) monks.
30. Discussing the Dhamma at the proper time.
31. Energetic self-restraint.
32. Holy and chaste life.
33. Insight into the Noble Truths.
34. Realization of Nibbana.
35. A mind unshaken by the ups and downs of life.
36. Freedom from sorrow.
37. Freedom from defilements of passion.
38. Perfect security.

Those who act in these ways cannot be defeated and always live in safety.

----- MahaMangala Sutta

Introduction to Buddhism Course

July 2018 (17th Intake)

- **How much do you know about Buddhism?**
- **Are you a knowledgeable Buddhist?**
- **What is the essence of Buddhism?**
- **Do you know how to practise Buddhism?**

Course Details:

Course date: **25th July to 26th Sept 2018** (10 Weeks)
Frequency: Every Wednesday 7:30pm to 9:30pm
Venue: Mangala Vihara Buddhist Temple
30 Jalan Eunos, S. 419495 *(opposite Eunos MRT)*
Course fees: By donation
E-mail: intro2buddhismbpca@gmail.com
Telephone: Sis. Lynn @ 82889888
Instructors: By experienced Dhamma Teachers

Topics are covered in plain and simple language and include:

The Freedom of Inquiry in Buddhism, the Life of the Buddha, the 3 Characteristics of Existence, the 4 Noble Truths and the Noble 8 Fold Path, Rebirth and Kamma, the Buddhist Texts, How to Practise Buddhism, the Different Buddhist Traditions, the Meaning of Common Buddhist Rituals and Chanting, Buddhist Meditation.

Organised by **the Buddhist and Pali College (BPC) of Singapore**

BUDDHIST AND PALI COLLEGE OF SINGAPORE

(Affiliated to Buddhist & Pali University of Sri Lanka)

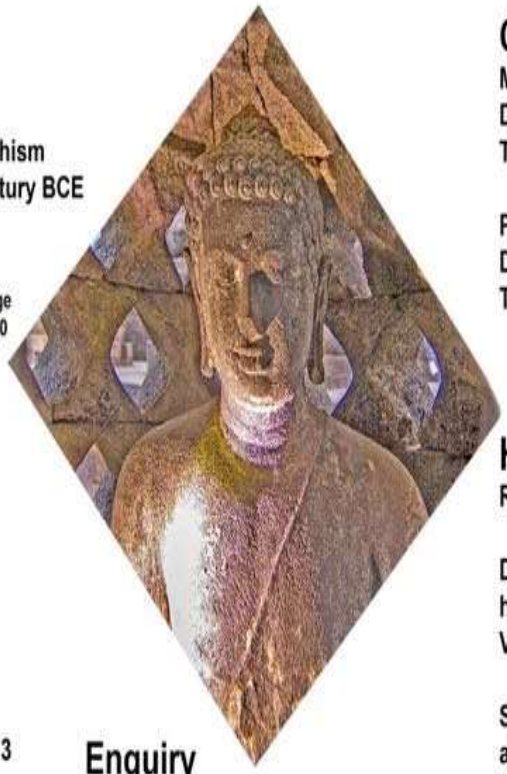
Diploma in Buddhism 2018 / 2019 (26th Intake)

"Kātaṃ ca sukataṃ seyyo Yaṃ katvā nānutappati"
Better it is to do a good deed, after doing which one does not grieve

Curriculum

- Early Buddhism - Basic Doctrines
- Buddhist Social Dimensions
- Geographical Expansion of Theravada Buddhism
- Early History of Buddhism up to the 3rd Century BCE
- Pali Qualifying Paper

Taught by qualified graduates of the Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore. Successful candidates eligible to enroll for 2020 Bachelor of Arts degree Programme in Buddhist Studies



Course Preview

Mangala Vihara Buddhist Temple
Date: 21 July 2018 Saturday
Time: 2pm - 4pm

Poh Ming Tze Temple
Date: 5 August 2018 Sunday
Time: 2pm - 4pm

Venue

Venue 1: Managala Vihara Buddhist Temple
30 Jalan Eunos, Singapore 419495

Tuesdays (7:30pm - 9:30pm)
Sundays (2:00pm - 5:15pm)

Venue 2: Poh Ming Tse Temple
438 Dunearn Road, Singapore 289613

Tuesdays (7:30pm - 9:30pm)
Fridays (7:00pm - 10:00pm)

Term : 7 Oct 2018 - 31 October 2019

Enquiry

Administration
Maureen Hui : 96282069
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Elizabeth Kheh : 90684630
email: kalyanama2017@gmail.com

How to Apply

Registration: 16 July to 31 August 2018

Download application form at http://mv.org.sg/ or collect from Mangala Vihara Buddhist Temple

Submit form with:
a) 2 passport size photos
b) A copy of IC or Birth Certificate
c) Registration fee: US$55
(Buddhist & Pali University, Sri Lanka)
d) Maintenance fee - S$240
(S$20 x 12 months)